

Vol. 4, No. 104

Greensburg, Indiana

October 1985

OCCASION: Fall Tour of the Decatur Co. Historical Society.

DATE: Sunday, October 6, 1985; 1:00 P.M.

PLACE: Tour Bus will leave promptly from the North side of the Court House Square.

PROGRAM: The Fall Outing of the Society will be a trip to the Museum of Indian Heritage located at Eagle Creek Park, Indianapolis. The museum has numerous exhibits and artifacts portraying the Eastern Woodland, Northwest Coast, southwestern and Plains Indian cultures as well as rare archaeological findings, some dating back as far as 15,000 B.C. Tatanka Iyotake Hicksila, grand-nephew of Sitting Bull, acclaimed it to be, "the most authentic collection I've seen in my lifetime". This tour represents an opportunity for a greater understanding of the American Indian, their lifestyle and culture. Transportation will be furnished by Wayne Davis and his trusty bus. Total cost: Bus fare, admission to park, and museum will be \$5 per person. You can't drive to Indy for this, let alone back. Along with all this you'll get to see the Park. Have you seen it? Come and enjoy yourself. We need to have the bus full to get the good rate. Please reserve by calling any one of the Directors as listed on the back of the Bulletin. Thank you.

#### INTRODUCING NEW MEMBERS

MARY Frances (Goodwin) Niedbalski, Bloomington  
Maurice D. Randall, Hope  
Leonard Pratt  
Claude R. Weber  
Mrs. Claude (Freida) Weber

Mrs. Lewis Braden (Mildred West) Indianapolis

Mrs. James K. Price (Diane Millis), San Diego, CA.

Monroe L. Calender, Litchfield, AZ

Mrs. Monroe (Barbara) Calender

Mrs. Vic (Eleanor) Couch

SUMMER MEETING of the Society- Some 50 members of the Decatur County Historical Society attended the summer meeting of the organization Sunday, July 7 on the Museum grounds.

Marlin Maddux, Society president, welcomed members and introduced the program chairman, Gilman Stewart and Dr. Steven Stradley.

Stewart told of the worldrenowned shorthorn cattle once raised by the Robbins family on Robinwood Farm, just east of Horace near Letts. Two of these cattle were world champion bulls, Gay Monarch and Raveni Masterpiece. They were buried on the farm.

Only recently their monuments and the surrounding iron fence were moved to the backyard of the County Museum 212 N. Franklin, to help preserve this part of Decatur County History.

John and Martha Robbins Whitehead, descendants of the Robbins, were present and gave additional history on the cattle operation. Mrs. Whitehead is the daughter of the late Earl Robbins, and last of the well-known, Decatur County shorthorn breeders.

Questions from the group were answered by Stewart. Several incidents about cattle raising of this period were offered by members of the audience. Four old-time drawings of the shorthorns were shown and donated to the museum by the Stewarts and Whiteheads. After inspection of the lithography and ink drawings, refreshments were served in the tree-shaded garden of Steve and Mary Stradley.

Greensburg, Indiana  
P. 3. Workingman's Institute

NEW DECATUR COUNTY HISTORIES are on sale at Maddux's Auction Barn or, the Curio Shop on the West side of the Square, Westport Gas Co., or George Cann at Westport. Make a wonderful gift to all interested in Decatur County. Think about it.

DONATIONS to the Society-

Mrs. William McCord, Wurtsboro, N.Y.	Mr. & Mrs. Van Batterton
Eleanor Couch, Greensburg	Vida Loucks
Sarah Woodfill Redelman	Frank & JoAnn Robbins
Maxine Clemons	Roberta Alyea
Anna Paul Lowe	Ray Sandlin
Cleo Renigar	Clyde's T.V.
Betty Shumaker	Louise D. Robbins
Mrs. Peter Becker Estate	Mildred West Braden
Dale G. Myers	Mrs. Dwight Williams
Martha Samuels	Alpha Thackery
Mrs. Wayne Tomson	Julia Meryl Logan
Richard Morrish	Dorothy Patton Tucker
AmRhein Estate	Helen Marlin

AN EARLY LIBRARY

By: Anna J. Foley

It was september 14, 1855. Henry H. Talbott, Decatur County's clerk-recorder, began writing on Page 541 of Deed Book W. This time he was not recording a land transaction, but formation of a group desirous of establishing a library in Greensburg. If their plans came to fruition this library must have been among the earliest in the county, but at present, nothing is known of it beyond the first steps in its organization.

The library as projected seems to have been intended not for the public, but for the organizers. They described themselves as "persons who labor with their hands and earn their living by the sweat of the brow". They had joined together "in accordance with 'Chapter 116 of the Revised Statutes of Indiana entitled an act to authorize the formation of voluntary associations'". Their purposes were "to obtain a library of useful books, to inform ourselves in reading, discussion, and lectures, and to acquire useful and practical knowledge". The group's official name was "The Decatur County Workingmen's Institute of Indiana at Greensburg".

The name suggests that the group may have been part of a larger movement. Brief research shows that workingmen's institutes began in England in the late 1700's as a response to the Industrial Revolution and a decline in the apprenticeship system of occupational preparation. The institute idea reached the United States by the early 1800's. Institute subject matter was chiefly scientific and practical. Its method was the lecture, supplemented by reading. The aims of the Greensburg group appear to have been within the historical framework of the workingmen's institutes.

In Indiana the movement received impetus from the will of William Maclure, who had been an educator at New Harmony. He established a fund of \$80,000 from which \$500 could be granted any workingmen's group with a library of one hundred books and a suit-



able meeting place. The first grants were made in 1855, and in time one hundred forty-four associations in eighty-nine Indiana counties came to receive funds. It is not known whether Maclure money reached Decatur County, but the record appears to suggest that the local group was trying to become eligible to apply for it.

Its constitution and by-laws as recorded in the deed book set out that each member was to be a manual laborer, was to sign the by-laws, and to pay fifty cents. The president was to appoint a committee to select books. These were to be placed in a reading and lecture room under supervision of a librarian who could also be treasurer. The number constituting a quorum was set at ten. There were provisions which sound as though their purpose was to make amending the constitution an inconvenient procedure. A corporate seal had been adopted, "an impression of which is hereon made". The seal was a circular device about the size of a quarter and inscribed, "Decatur County Working Men's Library Association". The document was signed by Richard B. Thompson, President with William W. Lowe, Secretary as witness.

On September 17, 1855 a representative of the group was back in Henry H. Talbott's office with a list of members. Thought Henry, "Why couldn't they have taken care of all this on the first trip?", but he dutifully wrote:

"The Decatur County Working Mens Institute of Indiana at Greensburg'

The Constitution and By-Laws of this Society which were recorded on pages 541, 542, and 543 of this Book, are now returned with the following list of names added thereto, to wit:

"Names	Occupation	Names	Occupation
B.H. Harney	Tailor	Enoch Ricketts	Carpenter
W.W. Lowe	Stone Cutter	Ezra Lathrop	Farmer
O. Thomson	Printer	Wm. A. Marsh	Plasterer
Jospeh Dillier	Shoe Maker	Chas. Nicholas	Carpenter
Creth J. Loyd	Plasterer	John W. McCune	Wagon Maker
R.B. Thompson	Carpenter	Justin M. Cure	Painter "

From this it appears that the local institute went into business with twelve members and by inference with \$6.00 in its treasury. It is to be hoped that membership picked up rapidly, if only because getting a quorum of ten from a group of twelve would surely have taken some doing!

The story ends here as far as it can be determined from Deed Book W. Perhaps newspapers of the period would prove informative. For the present we are left with questions about this early library. How many books could have been bought for \$6.00 in 1855? Was it necessary to buy a bookcase, or did a carpenter member of the institute put one together? Where was the meeting room? Was it in donated quarters, or was rent paid? If the library actually got off the ground, how long did it last and what became of its books?

A sad note about the fate of workingmen's libraries is sounded by one of the writers on the subject. He says that some associations were formed principally to qualify for Maclure money and soon disbanded, dividing the books among the members. Perhaps the local library had a long and useful life. Nevertheless, it does seem probable that its books were divided among its subscribers when it went out of existence.

Has anyone ever seen a book with the seal of the Decatur County Working Men's Library Association?

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One of A.A. Milne's poems about Christopher Robin Begins:

"let it rain!  
who cares?  
I've a train  
upstairs,"

I grew up in a house with a train upstairs.

My brother, John Paul Taylor, built an O-gauge model train track all around a 15-foot square bedroom in our farm house north of Adams. The track was about four feet above the floor. He built the tracks, crafted the engines and designed the switching board diagram and electric connections, and did all of the electric wiring himself.

He started working seriously at his hobby after he graduated from St. Paul High School in 1940. After serving in the Navy from 1942-1946, he resumed working on the trains. He farmed with my father, Luther Taylor, until 1971 when the farm was sold to Harold Myers.

The neighbors remember that there was usually a light on in the front upstairs southeast room until late at night. If they passed the house at the right time, they could see a passenger train with lighted windows whiz past the window.

In the days before television, neighbors visited each other after supper. When they came to our house, they usually found themselves up there watching the trains go around the tracks. There were double tracks and he could make one train go one way and another one the opposite way at the same time. There were switches where a train that appeared to be on a collision course with another could be diverted by my brother to another track or to the yard where other cars were sitting. Adults looked down at the trains and children looked up until the marvelous age when they were at eye-level with the tracks and turning wheels. Everyone was fascinated when they watched the moving trains, but they were even more delighted when they looked closely at the details of the tracks and rolling-stock.

O-gauge is a scale: one-fourth inch of the model equals one foot of the real track or train. He was very exact about measurements and details.



He made the tracks from pieces of aluminum rails about five feet long. They could be bent to fit curves. The rails were laid on top of ties made from balsa wood and fastened down with tiny nails. The base was some kind of wallboard.

There was a scale design of the tracks in many colors with buttons that controlled the electric currents and switches of the tracks. He could run the trains by standing in front of the switchboard and pushing buttons and flipping switches.

He started his hobby before model kits were available. After they were available he did not use them except for a few freight cars. His passenger cars are hand-crafted. I remember that he made the sides of the cars of one train by hammering a nail along lines on a piece of thin metal. The nail never went through the metal. When he was finished and turned the piece of metal over, it looked like it had been riveted. Many of the passenger cars were electrically lighted. Lounge cars and coaches had little seats in them. Dining cars had tables, chairs, and that rail which you hold on to when you are waiting in line for the dining car.

He purchased wheels for the cars. They are called trucks. He designed the boxes, cables and other things that are under a railroad car. He whittled them from wood or glued pieces of metal or springs together to resemble the real train parts. He used a tiny logo from an advertisement for the sign on the back of one observation car. It was the mountain goat on the Northwest Railroad emblem.

Some model-railroaders are enthusiastic about detailed settings such as towns and trees. John Paul was just interested in the trains and tracks. One winter he made an effort to make scenery on the wall paper around the room. Using colored chalk, he drew mountains, trees and lakes on one wall. He was artistic and did a fine job, but just was not motivated to finish the room.

John Paul loved trains all his life. He begged pennies from his grandfather when he was eye-level to the dining room table and ran them along the edge of the table saying, "Choo-choo-choo". Walls in our house were decorated with railroad calendars. Trains seemed to come at you from all directions. He got them from men who worked in depots. In 1940, we spent four days visiting relatives in a Chicago suburb and went over to Riverside every evening to watch the Burlington Zephyr, a silver streamliner, go through. We were always jumping in the car with a camera to go to Adams or Sandusky to watch some special engine go roaring through. We would slow down the car so that we could wait at the crossing for a freight train. After I was married, I was really shocked to discover that other families did not consider waiting for a long train to be one of the pleasures of life. When railroads began to disappear from Decatur County, he was the main person who started the Railway Museum at Westport. He spent much time away from his model trains down there working with the Baldwin engine. He wanted other people to share his love of trains.

When he died of leukemia in 1971, I loaned some of the trains and all of the tracks to our cousin in Arkansas. Al West, the person who started John Paul on his hobby, has tracks all over his basement. I have some of the cars and have shared them with the Decatur County Historical Museum this summer.

Submitted by: Hannah Brown

[illegible]

MUSEUM ITEM - Rocking Chair (child's)

Handmade by PRESLEY SAMUEL WEST for his first child, DAVID AGUSTUS (Gussie) WEST born March 12 1875, then used by his other children, ESTA PEARL WEST McCORMACK born April 19, 1877, HERBERT EUGENE WEST born March 1, 1879, and HERSCHEL OTTO WEST born December 14, 1883.

Saplings were cut by hand from woods surrounding the Tollgate at the Eastern edge of Greensburg, which was the first home of PRESLEY SAMUEL WEST and LIZZIE MARSH WEST, who were married February 13, 1873. Evenings were spent whittling each piece with a pocket knife by lamplight. Wooden pegs were used in the construction, and the original seat was woven from lengths of tree bark.

The rockers are very worn due to usage by the four children and several grandchildren.

Presented by MILDRED WEST BRADEN, daughter of GUSSIE WEST, who has cared for the chair for many years.

[illegible]

DECATUR COUNTY IN WORLD WAR II-

It has been suggested that more information about Decatur County in World War II be published. Is it possible that the readers of the Bulletin could share their memories of that era with each other by writing for future issues of the Bulletin?

Readers find personal memories very interesting. Everyone who remembers that time has at least one good story. Decatur County had many servicemen and women. Lots of our citizens went to work in defense plants. People spent countless hours collecting money, scrap metal, and rubber, and giving blood to the Red Cross and other agencies.

Suggested by Hannah Brown

MAMMOTH CAVE BICYCLE TRIP (cont.)

by: A.L. Westhafer

I had planned on leaving the bunch at Scottsburg and going alone from there to Washington so I could help Uncle Carlton on the farm during the summer. We sailed along well and arrived at Scottsburg about 9:30 A.M. Bill Day loaned me \$4.00 from the \$10.00 he had, and I took off for Washington, a distance of about seventy miles. I knew that I would have to set a fast pace in order to make it before dark, so I pedaled along at a fast clip, stopping only a few



minutes in Paoli to eat a sandwich and a candy bar. I arrived at French Lick about 3:30 in the afternoon, having covered forty miles, leaving me a long twenty-eight to thirty to go. As I left French Lick, there was a bridge out across the river. Men were working on the bridge, and they said I would have to detour about twenty miles to get across the river. They said the water was too deep for me to wade across. I considered trying it but decided that I might get over my head carrying the bicycle, and I could not lose the bike. So I went back to French Lick to the B & O Railway Station. I knew the B & O ran into Washington, and it seemed the only alternative I had left was to ride the train the rest of the trip. It was about 4:30 by the time I asked the railroad agent about a ticket to Washington and when the next train would be along. The next train was not scheduled until 10:00 P.M., and after buying the ticket I had only fifteen cents left -- not enough to pay the thirty cents required to ship the bicycle in the baggage car. The agent offered to give me fifteen cents to make up the required fee, but I refused and asked him to ship the bike "collect". This he did, saying it was just as well, because when the train arrived in Washington, the train baggage man locked any merchandise he might have in the baggage room at the Washington Station. There would be no Washington baggage man to let me have the bike before 9:00 A.M. the next morning.

So I had a long wait in French Lick between 4:30 and 10:00 P.M. Since the bike was taken care of on the "collect" basis and I had my ticket, I walked over into town and spent ten cents on a hamburger for my supper. It was delicious; I never had one better before nor since. The train finally arrived an hour or so late and began the twenty-eight mile run to Washington. The train stopped several times to load and unload cream cans, etc. finally arriving in Washington about 2:00 A.M. I walked the one and a half miles out to Uncle Lester's house on U.S. 50 East in the darkest night I was ever out in. When I walked up the steps from the road to the yard, a new dog (a young pup Uncle Lester had acquired since I was there last) came running around the house barking at me and acting like he would take a bite out of my leg. I jumped at him, and he ran back around the house yelping like I had actually kicked him. The commotion awakened Aunt Mid. She opened the front door and asked who was out there. I told her, and she ushered me into the house. She wanted to know where I had been, and while I filled her in on my bicycle trip, she put some food on the table for me. After a good night's sleep, Aunt Mid gave me a quarter to go with the nickel in my pocket, and John and I drove Uncle Lester's Model "T" Ford into town, and I picked up the bike at the depot. This ended the Mammoth Cave experience.

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I cannot give you a formula  
for success, but I can give  
you the formula for failure -  
which is: Try to please everybody!

HERBERT BYARD SWOPE

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